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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3944  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 6033  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3727  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3586  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4275  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4214  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1339  
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 001646

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/22/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [UZ](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: CHANGE IN VISA REGIME WITH  
UZBEKISTAN A SIGN OF CLOSER TIES

REF: ASHGABAT 1130

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Sylvia Reed Curran. Reasons 1.4 (B) a  
nd (D).

11. (SBU) On December 13, the day before the opening of the Turkmenistan-China pipeline, President Karimov of Uzbekistan had official meetings with Turkmenistan President Berdimuhamedov in Ashgabat. The presidents signed four documents, including a joint communique and a cooperation agreement between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the two countries. An agreement on expanding cooperation into the fields of science, culture, and technology, among other things, also included a segment about loosening the visa regime for residents of both sides of the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan border. Once the agreement goes into effect, residents of Dashoguz and Lebap provinces and their neighbors in Uzbekistan, will be able to travel to the other country for three days without a visa. According to Ilyos Makhamadaliev, the Counselor at the Uzbekistan Embassy in Ashgabat, this was partially done to improve trade, but also done to improve relations between two "brotherly" people.

12. (C) Makhamadaliev noted that improving trade between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan was a priority for Uzbekistan. He said his government was particularly interested in industry, textiles, and the energy sector, although to date those were not areas of much cooperation (reftel). Makhamadaliev said that the presidents talked about regional energy issues, and that Turkmenistan supported Uzbekistan's proposals on regional water resources and did not have any concerns about Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the Central Asian energy grid. Makhamadaliev insisted that Turkmenistan's views are in line with Uzbekistan's on regional energy. For example, he said that Turkmenistan agreed that before Tajikistan is allowed to build a hydroelectric station, the consequences for the downstream countries should be studied. The Uzbekistan President has also proposed that if permission for the hydroelectric station is granted, then its construction should be monitored by an international

organization.

13. (C) COMMENT: Makhamadaliev emphasized, as he has in the past, that the good relationship between the Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan presidents makes his job easy. We know that Berdimuhamedov's views do not completely coincide with the Uzbeks on regional energy, but that may have not been shared with the Uzbeks or Makhamadaliev may have chosen not to share any conveyed differences with us. Makhamadaliev seemed upbeat in general about politics in the region and the benefits of the new Turkmenistan-China pipeline, which he said would benefit Uzbekistan in terms of new pipeline infrastructure and more jobs, and because his government could sell Uzbek gas to China. The easing of the visa regime, even if only for those that live near the border, seems to be a concrete sign of this political good will. END COMMENT.  
CURRAN